

Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers December 15, 2004

Survive The Holiday Drive

Traffic and congestion seem to be synonymous with the holiday season, and sadly, so are traffic crashes. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), traffic deaths on our nation's roadways spike significantly during the holiday period. While many drivers are aware of the hazards associated with driving in winter weather, many people are unaware of the other dangerous risks they may encounter during their holiday travel. As a vast majority of Americans are expected to take to the roadways this holiday season and with long distance travel increasing by almost 23 percent, the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS) is encouraging drivers to drive safely and be vigilant of their driving behaviors. More.....

http://www.trafficsafety.org/newsletter/12_15_04a.asp

Latest Traffic Safety News

Michigan Center for Truck Safety Annual Conference

The third annual Michigan Truck Exposition & Safety Symposium will be held on February 22-23, 2005 at the Lansing Center in Downtown Lansing. Just a few of the topics that will be covered include cargo securement, driver qualification and developing a safety management plan. For more information.....<http://www.truckingsafety.org/pdf/winter04.pdf>

Windshield Recorders Reduce Cable Company's Crash Rate

Time Warner Cable in San Diego recently announced a 41 percent crash reduction over the past two years and credits its success to windshield-mounted video recorders that tapes what a driver sees and hears while on duty. The system consists of a software package and a small video recorder that has been mounted to the windshield. The driver is required to download data into the main server every two weeks, allowing the company to review, analyze, and critique driver performance. Drivers liked the device as they saw positive rewards for avoiding collisions and had proof that they weren't responsible for the crash. Read the case study at <http://www.drivecam.com/docs/DCTimeWarner.pdf>

Red Light Camera Legislation Set To Expire In Virginia

Legislation that would have continued the use of red light cameras in some Virginia communities beyond their July 1, 2005 expiration date is set to expire in the face of continued opposition. The devices, which automatically photograph vehicles when they run red lights, are favored by many law enforcement officials for safety reasons, but have raised concerns among some legislators and privacy advocates that say the cameras are intrusive and unfair. Many opponents believe there are other effective alternatives including extending the length of yellow lights and placing unmanned police vehicle at intersections to slow vehicles. Meanwhile, more than 70 percent of motorists surveyed by AAA Virginia indicate support for the cameras. Read the full article at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A52514-2004Nov15.html>

AAA Survey Finds Drowsy Driving To Be Growing Concern

A recent survey by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found that police officers believe drowsy driving is a serious traffic safety problem. According to the survey, 88 percent of the respondents

reported stopping a driver who they believed to be drunk, but who was actually drowsy. View the report at <http://www.aaafoundation.org/pdf/PoliceDD.pdf>

Virginia Seeks 'Bad Driver' Surcharge

Legislators in northern Virginia are introducing a new plan that gets "bad drivers" to help pay for building new roads and lower congestion levels. According to supporters, the new plan could raise \$140 million a year for roads, bridges, tunnels, and transit by creating additional fines for repeat speeders, motorists driving on suspended licenses, and those involved in hit-and-run crashes. Modeled after a similar program in New Jersey, which raised over \$300 million over the past two years, the proposal imposes surcharges on motorists who accumulate three speeding tickets or other infractions over three years. Read the full article at http://www.truckflix.com/news_article.php?newsid=1769

New Hampshire Summit Focuses On Elderly Drivers

A recent road safety summit in New Hampshire attended by local law enforcement, legislators, and community groups focused on helping the elderly drive more safely and included recommendations to create new restrictions on seniors' driver's licenses. According to experts, as drivers age they have decreased visual, mental, and physical abilities. Under current New Hampshire state law, when drivers at least 75 years old renew their licenses, they must take an eye and road test. Per the examiner's discretion, a written exam may be required. The renewed license is valid for five years. However, proposed legislation would limit the validity of renewed licenses for drivers 75 years old or older for a period of one, two, three, or four years. Other efforts would restrict the distance elderly drivers travel from their home and limit them from traveling on the highway system. Read the full article at http://www.theunionleader.com/articles_showa.html?article=48159

New Trend Has Automakers Providing SUV Seating In Sedans

Inspired by the popularity of SUVs, many automakers are raising the height of front seats in regular cars. Automakers are hoping the "booster seats" will appeal to aging baby boomers outgrowing their SUV years, and give a much needed boost to sales as SUV sales flatten amid rising fuel costs. Ford Motor Company advertises its new 'Five Hundred Sedan' as riding nearly four inches higher providing better visibility than its Taurus. Ford has dubbed and trademarked the new trend as "Command Seating."

Black Boxes Gain Traction With Nebraska Trucking Company, Automakers

As Canada announces its support for government-mandated event data recorders or "black boxes" to ensure hours-of-service (HOS) rule compliance, Nebraska-based Werner Enterprises was granted permission by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) to use paperless logs and log hours using GPS technology. The company is the only motor carrier in the trucking industry to employ paperless logs. Yet, the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA) recently announced its oppositions to black box recorders and has filed comments with the government expressing its concerns. OOIDA believes that black boxes will have the same problems as paper logs, since they still require driver input. Werner Enterprises system transmits data directly to company headquarters where it is processed and stored. The company credits the new system to increasing driver miles. Meanwhile, automakers including General Motors, Ford, and Toyota, are also looking to install black boxes on many new models. Read the press release at <http://www.werner.com/> Read OOIDA's comments at http://www.landlinemag.com/todays_news/Documents/120104_EOBR_Comments.PDF



NHTSA Holiday Planner To Prevent Impaired Driving Now Available

Alcohol is a contributing factor in 39 percent of all work-related crashes and costs employers a staggering \$55 billion each year from both on and off the job crashes. To help ensure the safety of the nation's workforce this holiday season, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has provided impaired driving prevention materials as part of the National 3-D Monthly campaign in December. Campaign materials include impaired driving prevention information and messaging that can be distributed via e-mail or incorporated into employee safety education sessions, organizational newsletters, or workplace displays. Visit the 3-D Month Holiday Planner at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/alcohol/StopImpaired/HolidayPlanner/index.htm>

NHTSA Expected To Announce New Braking Rule

NHTSA intends to propose a rule on shortening heavy truck stopping distances by 30 percent. While the federal agency is not intending to require or promote any particular technology, if a fade resistance test is required by the rule, use of disc brakes is expected to be encouraged. Drum brakes fade as they heat and expand and would have to be made of different material to meet the new standard. However, disc brakes are more expensive and would need to be redesigned to accommodate the standard. The new rule is expected to be announced in late December.

NHTSA's 'Buying a Safer Car' Brochure Now Available

The 2005 version of "Buying a Safer Car" brochure is now available for public dissemination. The brochure is published annually by NHTSA and includes the latest crash test results and key safety features for model year 2005 vehicles. For more information and to download the brochure visit www.safercar.gov

NHTSA: Seat Belt Usage Up In 37 States

NHTSA released the latest seat belt usage results and found that 37 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have increased seat belt use between 2003 and 2004. The new statistics also show that the 95 percent belt use rate barrier has been broken for the first time this year by two states, Arizona and Hawaii. Michigan is also the first state East of California to achieve a 90% belt use rate.

Work-Life

Report Assess Bicycle, Pedestrian Safety Progress

The Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center released a report assessing the USDOT activities and progress in the ten years since the National Bicycling and Walking Study was released. View the report at http://www.bicyclinginfo.org/pdf/NBWS_10yr_Progress_Report.pdf

International Traffic Safety News

Canadian Experts Target Flawed DWI Legal System

Ottawa-based Traffic Injury Research Foundation (TIRF) recently released a new report summarizing the solutions and successes in reforming the DWI legal system for dealing with high-BAC, and repeat offenders who cause the vast majority of drunk-driving deaths. Sponsored by Anheuser-Busch Companies, the goal of the four-part research project was to identify priority problems and recommend practical solutions in each phase of the justice system. It outlined priority recommendations in six general areas including technology, legislation, resources, communication and cooperation, training and education, and record linkages (availability and access). The recommendations were drawn from

law enforcement, prosecutors, judges and probation and parole officers.
Read the release at

<http://trafficinjuryresearch.com/whatNew/whatNew.cfm?intNewsID=142&intContactID=3>

Sweeping Traffic Safety Reforms Expected In The UK

New legislation in the UK is expected to unveil sweeping reforms to improve roadway safety. According to the bill, impaired drivers will be forced to re-take exams, bad drivers will be forced to undergo retraining, and drivers using hand-held cell phones will be punished. Also among the reforms, a new flexible system of speeding fines that matches the punishment to the severity of the offence is expected to be included. The proposals come as the Department of Transport is aiming to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured in traffic crashes by 40 percent by the year 2010. Read the full article at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2004/11/30/uroads.xml&sSheet=/portal/2004/11/30/ixportaltop.html> Read the press release at http://www.dft.gov.uk/pns/displaypn.cgi?pn_id=2004_0153

Study: Commuters Suffer From Extreme Stress

A new study in the UK suggests that commuters experience greater stress than fighter pilots going into battle or riot police officers. The study compared the heart rate and blood pressure of 125 commuters with those of pilots and police officers in training exercises and found the stress levels of commuters were higher in extreme circumstances. Stress experts found that the stress is attributable to commuters' inability to control the situation. Further research has led to the identification of "commuter amnesia," in which people forget large parts of journey because of stress. Read the full article at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4052861.stm

Canada Truck Industry Adopts New HOS, Black Box Rules

The Canadian Trucking Alliance (CTA) recently announced its decision to immediately adopt federal regulations and national standards governing truck driver hours of services, which was approved last year by the Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation & Highway Safety. The Alliance is also calling for the mandatory use of electronic on-board recording technology, or "black boxes," to ensure compliance with the new rules. The new restrictions would limit daily and weekly driving times and impose a 24 percent increase in daily rest times in comparison to the existing rules. Read the press release at <http://www.cantruck.com/news/news/2004/041126.htm>

Drinking and Driving Tops Social Concerns In Canada

A new survey conducted by TIRF found that the majority of Canadian drivers, believe drinking and driving to be a priority social issue and the most serious traffic safety issue they face, yet nearly one in five survey respondents admitted to driving after drinking in the previous month. Of the 1,200 drivers surveyed, 81 percent expressed greater concern over drinking and driving than issues such as the state of the health care system, airline safety, or the threat of terrorism. The survey also found that this concern carries over to teenage drinking and driving, even though young drivers are less likely than older drivers to engage in this behavior. Read the press release at <http://trafficinjuryresearch.com/whatNew/whatNew.cfm?intNewsID=145&intContactID=3>

Survey Finds UK Fleets Cracking On Cell Phone Law Abuse

One year after a law was introduced banning the use of hand-held cell phones while driving, a new survey shows that nearly all of Britain's fleets are operating a zero-tolerance policy against drivers violating the law. Most companies face disciplinary action if they are found to have broken the law. The survey results come as the government announced its plans for a draft Corporate Manslaughter Bill that could hold companies accountable for a fatal crash involving one of their drivers. The government

also announced its plans for sweeping traffic safety reforms that includes tougher penalties for those using a hand-held cell phone while driving.



UK Fleet Managers Learn The Value Of Driver Training

UK fleet managers are being urged to train their drivers as an effective means to reduce roadway crashes. Some experts say that training may be the only way to ensure companies are meeting their duty of care to drivers. One member of the Association of Car Fleet Operators said it would cost £18,000 to train one fleet of 1,800, but considering that the cost of a single death can be more than £1 million, the investment is worth it.

Women Influence Company Car Market

According to the UK's Royal Automobile Club (RAC), women are increasingly influencing the company car market. RAC projects that up to 80 percent of company vehicle choices made today could be influenced by women, even though they make up just 13 percent of the UK's fleet drivers. According to the RAC Report on Motoring 2004, eight out of 10 company cars will have been chosen by or with the help of a female. As a result, manufacturers are now taking women seriously during the design process. For example, Volvo is displaying its first concept car developed by an all-female team. View the full report at http://www.rac.co.uk/racworld/issues/report_on_motoring_04/motoring_facts

Top Ten Red Light Running Excuses In The UK

The Northumberland Safety Camera Partnership has listed and announced its 10 most elaborate excuses from drivers who have been caught by speed cameras. The excuses include:

I had passed out after seeing flashing lights, which I believed to be UFOs in the distance. The flash of the camera brought me round from my trance.

I was in the airport's flight path and the camera was triggered by a jet overhead.

I had a severe bout of diarrhea and had to speed to a public toilet.

There was a strong wind behind my car, which pushed me over the limit.

My friend had just chopped his fingers off and I was rushing the fingers to hospital.

The vibrations from the surfboard I had on the roof rack set off the camera.

I had to rush my dying hamster to the vet.

A violent sneeze caused a chain reaction where my foot pushed down harder on the accelerator.

There was a suspected case of foot and mouth and I had to rush to see the cow concerned.

The only way I could demonstrate my faulty clutch was to accelerate madly.